Office of Development Information
Center for Development Information and Evaluation

KNOW-LEDGE for development

Development Information Report
FY 1993

"As A.I.D. begins to look at how it will deliver development assistance in the 21st century, CDIE will continue to seek ways to be more responsive to these changes with new approaches and advanced technical resources. Much has been accomplished; much more remains to be done."

Foreword

John Eriksson, Director, Center for Development Information and Evaluation

Dear colleague:

CDIE was established with a simple goal in mind: Improving A.I.D.'s ability to achieve development results through better knowledge of past performance and the development of improved information tools and resources. Combining the evaluation and information utilization functions within a single center gave our developing country counterparts and A.I.D. offices overseas (USAID's) and in Washington (A.I.D./W) a focal point where information and knowledge about A.I.D. and other development experiences could be applied. Meeting these challenges has been our mission.

I am very proud of the record of accomplishment of CDIE's Office of Development Information (DI) and its many contributions to our mission. As the following pages show, CDIE/DI has been in the forefront among donor organizations in marshaling the latest methods and technologies in information services. As a result, we also believe that an increasingly valuable and unique resource has been created for the entire development community.

As A.I.D. begins to look at how it will deliver development assistance in the 21st century, CDIE will continue to seek ways to be more responsive to these changes with new approaches and advanced technical resources. Much has been accomplished; much more remains to be done. We look forward to meeting these new challenges.

John Eriksson,
Director,
Center for Development
Information and
Evaluation

Introduction

Maury Brown,
Chief, Office of Development Information

Since its creation in 1983, CDIE's Office of Development Information (DI) has been charged with the task of collecting and disseminating development information from both the Agency, its contractors, development organizations and other donors. The goal has always been to preserve Agency development experience, perform relevant analysis and synthesis, and deliver the information to Agency personnel who can put it to use. Hence the name of DI's authorizing project — Information as a Tool in Development.

In pursuing this mandate, DI has developed a number of extraordinary capabilities that have served the Agency time after time. DI's Research and Reference Services provide developing country counterparts and Agency personnel on demand with technical support and information services. The Development Information System — a computerized database of over 70,000 Agency-funded technical documents and more than 7,000 project descriptions — is a model for other donor organizations. DI's links with the World Bank and the U.S. Department of Agriculture enable it to provide detailed economic data (via its Economic and Social Data Service) and technical assistance on agricultural issues (through the Technical Inquiry Group). You can read more about these separate components of DI at the end of this report.

The most important ingredient in DI's success has been its ability to meet changing Agency needs. Long ago we understood the crucial difference between information and knowledge, and ever since have worked hard to find ways to turn volumes of Agency documentation and data into relevant and timely products designed to solve specific problems.

This report highlights a few recent initiatives — under the general headings of "Responsiveness," "Decentralization," and "Information exchange" — that have had a significant impact on Agency activities and that we hope will continue to be productive long into the future.

For example, the development of CD-DIS, and DI's entrance into CD-ROM publishing in general, is a major technological breakthrough that will pay dividends for years to come. Similarly, the establishment of regional information centers is indicative of DI's increased presence in Bureau and

Regional offices, providing information services on site. Finally, DI's role in formulating information exchange standards between donor organizations has been pivotal and historic.

I hope you'll find the information in this report interesting and useful. As A.I.D. continues to evolve, DI is committed to providing the knowledge needed to create and sustain change.

DI brings a wealth of information resources to bear on specific development problems

Over the past fifteen years, the Office of Development Information (DI) has contributed significantly to A.I.D.'s ability to provide programmatic and technical information services to the development community. The DI staff has provided access to and analysis of international economic and social development experience, tracked emerging issues, explored alternative development approaches, and helped A.I.D. stay informed on the activities of international development organizations. In 1992, DI responded to over 30,000 requests for research services and documents.

DI recognized the necessity to respond to the changing requirements of A.I.D. and actively sought to anticipate potential needs. Significant steps were taken to forecast information and research requirements. Innovative services and products were created to prepare for this period of rapid change and the resulting shift in

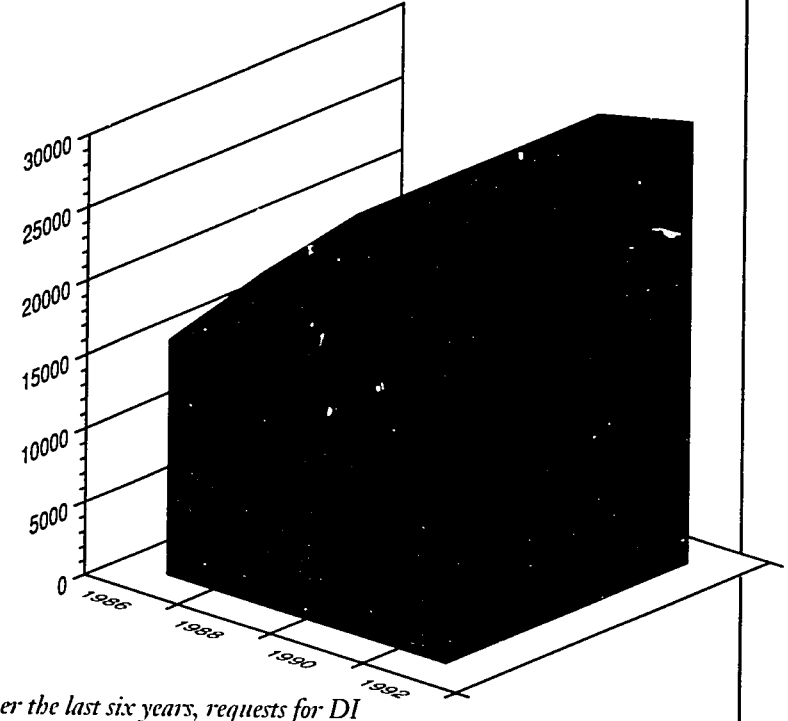
regional and substantive development strategies.

While continuing to respond efficiently to a large volume of requests, DI's staff increased their subject specialization to match new Agency focuses.

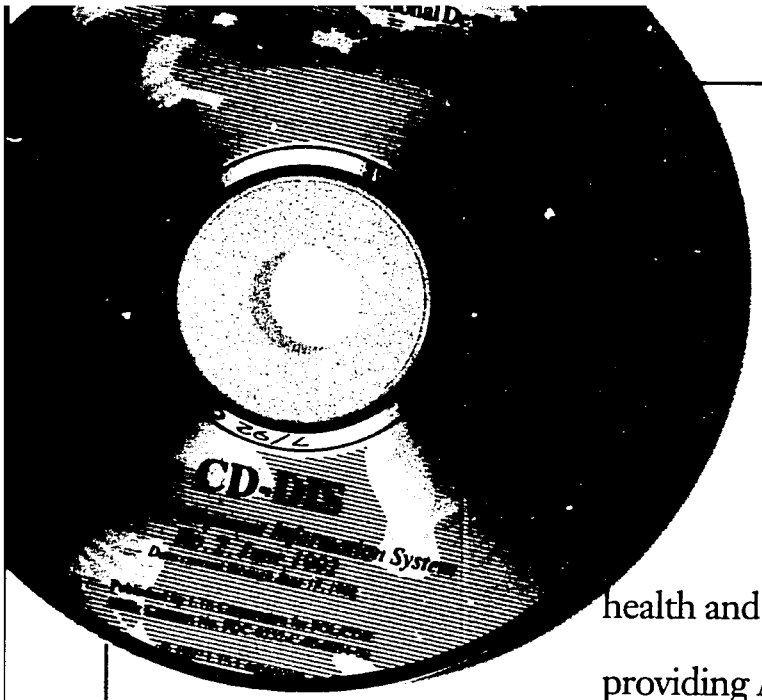
DI's specialists concentrate on those areas most important to Agency interests including agriculture, environment and natural resources, private sector development, and

We cannot emphasize enough the importance and usefulness of the materials provided. As a consequence, we were able to achieve in one mission what may have taken two or more missions to accomplish.

—Janelle Daane, Bureau for Private Enterprise



Over the last six years, requests for DI research services from Agency personnel have increased about 100%



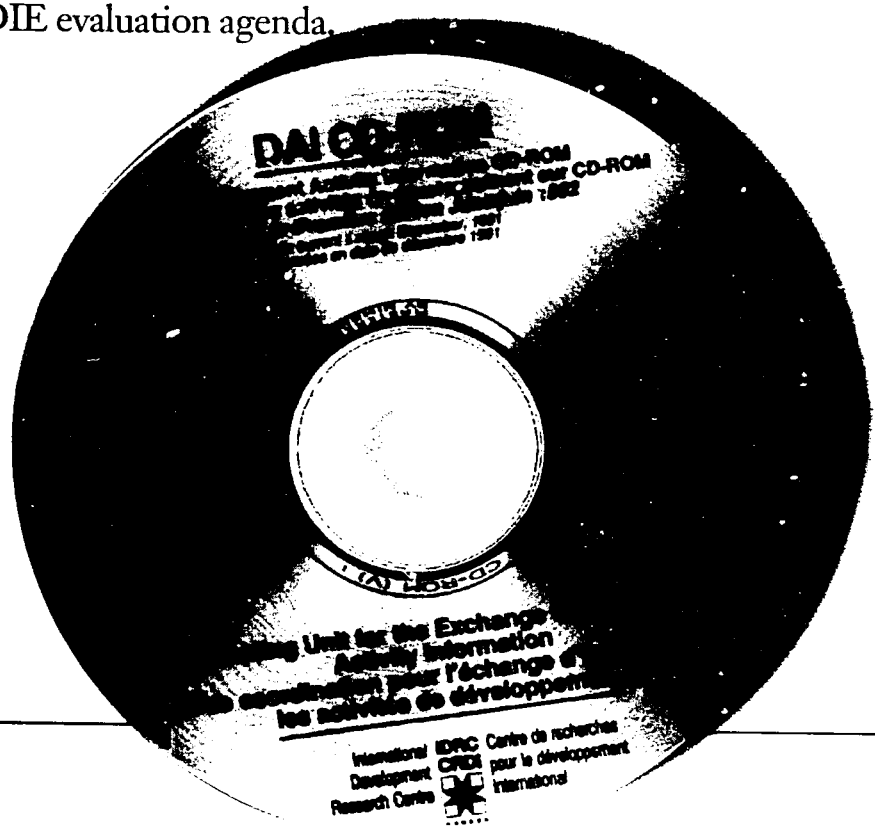
DI's CD-DIS uses compact disc technology to bring information into the field

In 1992 DI introduced its high-tech solution to make tens of thousands of important A.I.D. documents readily available to the Agency and Missions. *CD-DIS* contains over 70,000 documents on development and over 7000 project descriptions which are continuously updated and expanded and distributed quarterly.

health and population. DI is committed to providing A.I.D. with specialized information services as rapidly as global change mandate. For instance, DI recognized a rapidly expanding need for specialized information on Russia and the Newly Independent States, allocated new resources, and proactively brought in an expert on that region to fill this significant information gap. By responding to anticipated areas of A.I.D. information needs, DI is able to supply the Agency with specialized and well-researched knowledge, analysis, and information as soon as questions arise.

DI has acted to improve USAID project performance by linking DI researchers with CDIE's Office of Evaluation. Sector working groups on economic policy reform, human services, private sector development, agriculture, natural resources and environment, operations and management assessment, and democracy provide the field with preliminary evaluation findings before

final reports are issued. In the sector working group capacity, DI staff have played a crucial role in bringing Mission experience to bear upon the CDIE evaluation agenda.



Special Interest Group for CD-ROM Technology and Applications' Jerry McFaul praised the A.I.D. CD-ROM as "one of the best databases I've ever seen. They've put on the screen only what is necessary to guide you and give access to the information."

—Computer Digest,
December 1992

DI gathers information from across the donor community with the *DAI* CD-ROM

DI is responsible for the development of the *DAI* CD-ROM, which contains the Central Development Activity Database of 68,000 records describing the activities and projects of more than 200 international, regional, and bilateral donor agencies and non-governmental organizations, further augmenting DI's information resources.

Research specialists, bureau liaisons, and regional information centers provide critical information support services

Chief among DI's goals has been to make resources as accessible as possible to Agency personnel and developing country counterparts. This year, for instance, DI had over 20 specialists working with Agency staff, providing answers, research, and data to support A.I.D. projects worldwide. On many occasions, DI staff have traveled internationally to provide critical support to Missions during any point in the project cycle.

During the past several years, DI has made a systematic effort to place its research specialists and economic analysts on site in individual A.I.D. Bureaus to improve access to DI resources. Researchers in the Bureaus, ("bureau liaisons"), identify, define, and fill information gaps, as well as assist the Bureau in meeting the information needs of the Agency. Most importantly, the liaison is regarded as a colleague who shares that Bureau's vision of development. Currently there are liaisons in seven different A.I.D.

Bureaus including, the Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Near East, Europe, Research and Development, and Private Enterprise Bureaus.

Specialists are also at work in such important A.I.D. offices as Women in Development, Capital Projects, and the Center for Trade and Investment Services.

Special Projects researchers provide client offices with numerous services that go far

Not only do I personally really appreciate this kind of support, but it is the kind of support that enables this office to protect and promote A.I.D.'s interest with Congress.

—Ray Randlett, AA/LEG, 1989-92

CDIE's collaboration in this project went beyond the provision of information...we were better able to apply relevant information and experiences elsewhere to the situation here in Egypt.

—Priscilla Del Bosque, Associate Director, USAID/Egypt

I want you to know how much I appreciate your prompt attention to our request. It has been very helpful for our relations with the Government (of Nepal) as a whole to be able to be so responsive to this request for literature on financing land reform. Ambassador Bloch and I send out thanks for a job well done.

—Kelly C. Kammerer, Director, USAID/Nepal

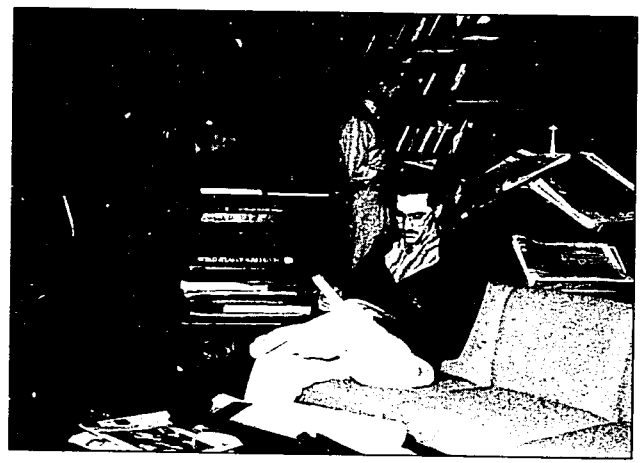
beyond information dissemination, including assisting in the preparation of biannual reports to the Congress of the United States, responding to trade and investment inquiries from the US private sector, producing and disseminating substantive and promotional literature, and providing critical support to the design, implementation, and review of new and ongoing projects.

A.I.D. Mission staff on duty overseas have, on numerous occasions, requested the direct assistance of DI specialists. DI personnel have had broad experience working with Missions in program and project design, strategic planning, and data support. With their unique access to DI's vast information resources and their thorough understanding of key development issues, these experts have been very successful in bringing knowledge and information directly to A.I.D. Missions.

Specialized information centers provide targeted services

Other DI efforts to make information more accessible to the Agency include the Development Information Center (DIC), the Center for Trade and Investment Services (CTIS), the Africa Bureau Information Center (ABIC) and the Regional Information Clearinghouse (RIC) in the Regional Office for Central America and Panama (ROCAP). ABIC combines the expertise of Bureau liaisons with on-site research staff, and maintains a specialized collection of democracy and governance information. ABIC supplies the Bureau and A.I.D. Missions throughout Africa with answers to their questions as they emerge from the study of democratization.

Like ABIC, the RIC seeks to locate information where it is most needed. However, the RIC brings the concept of on-site information a step further by providing an "in-country" information dissemination resource in that region. ROCAP's major program goal is to facilitate coordination of development policies and processes in Central America. To help ROCAP realize this goal, the Clearinghouse provides timely, accurate, targeted information to US development assistance staff and programs, other donors, select regional institutions, and key decision makers — all of whom are engaged in development activity in Central America.



I am truly wonderstruck over the responsiveness and excellence of your research into international financial risk management. The materials you've unearthed are of considerable value to our efforts in providing technical assistance.

—Ken Kopstein, RHUDO, USAID/Jamaica

I would like you to know what a great job (DI) did in digging up and pulling together a mini-history of A.I.D. for me....this activity was in response to a congressional request for historical information about A.I.D. Thus, I believe CDIE's efforts have helped further our relations with Congress. Thanks very much to all. I am impressed by what CDIE can do.

—Tyler Posey, DAA/LEG

Congratulations!! You seem to have found the "needle in the haystack"!

—Michael E. Evnin, Food 2000 Inc.

You guys really do a fantastic job. You contribute to high morale and more realistic development planning and effective implementation.

—David Soroko, Agricultural Economist, USAID/Kenya

Information centers like the Development Information Center in Rosslyn, Virginia (top) are an important element in DI's dissemination effort. The Center for Trade and Investment Services (left) provides private development information to U.S. companies who want to do business in developing countries through participation in A.I.D.-funded programs.

Information exchange agreements expand international donor cooperation

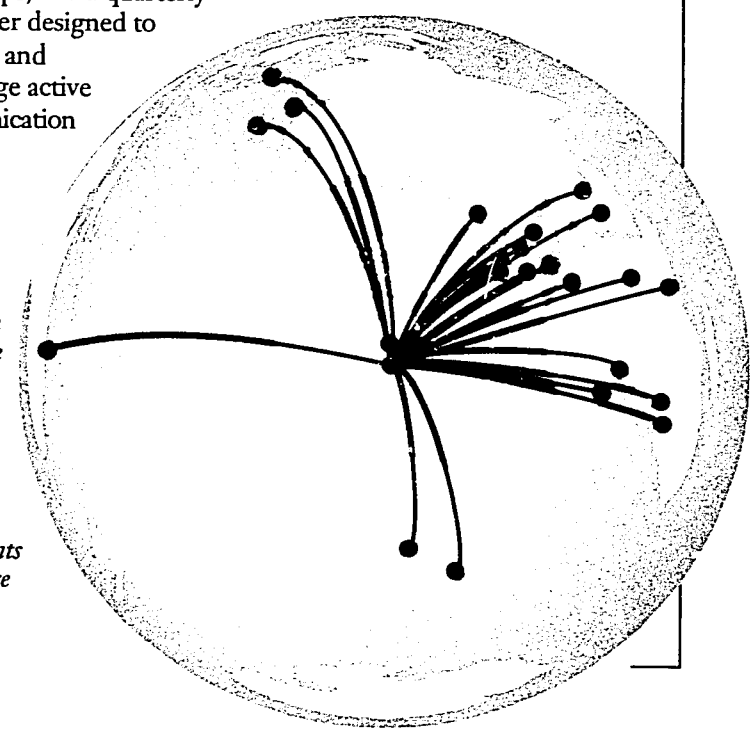
DI has been in the forefront of efforts to improve information sharing by the international development community at large. In the past, DI has sought to strengthen A.I.D. coordination with other donors with varying degrees of success. Yet the geopolitical shifts of the past several years have greatly affected the international development community, and have improved the climate for information sharing and exchange between development organizations. With this in mind, DI has actively encouraged a spirit of cooperation within the development community to further the goals of all.

This initiative has been a great success as reflected in the recent examples of inter-donor sharing of information on their development activities via the DAI CD-ROM and establishing standards for facilitating this information exchange in the CEFDA format (see sidebar). An immense amount of new and varied information from

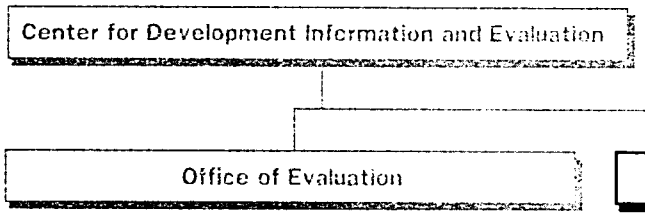
thousands of sources world-wide has been brought to A.I.D., augmenting and broadening the knowledge that DI already provides to the Agency. Moreover, this cooperation and information sharing within the development community enhances development efforts world-wide.

Common Exchange Format for Development Activity Information encourages information exchange

A major step in this direction was taken in June 1991, at the first general meeting of the Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information in Paris. The meeting, hosted by the OECD Development Centre and chaired by the Director of DI, was attended by 80 representatives of bilateral donors, UN Agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and research institutes from around the world. Participants at the general meeting approved a new standard for sharing development activity information: the Common Exchange Format For Development Activity Information (CEFDA). With this format in place, transfer and sharing of information can be made widely available through the improved exchange of development strategies and knowledge between development organizations. As a result of the meeting, the Development Activity Information (*DAI*) CD-ROM was introduced as a method by which the wealth of information made available by CEFDA could be most efficiently distributed. The *DAI* CD-ROM contains over 68,000 records representing the activities of more than 200 international, regional, and national agencies and non-governmental organizations. Also established were a series of information dissemination workshops, and a quarterly newsletter designed to improve and encourage active communication between the various organizations involved in the information sharing initiative. The success of the meeting and the recognized need for development information sharing has led to the planning of a second general meeting scheduled for October 1993.



The Informal Study Group on Exchange of Development Information includes participants from more than 22 countries.



One of DI's four divisions can help meet yo

Research and Reference Services

The Research and Reference Services (R&RS) unit of DI provides access to and analysis of international economic and social development experience. Its team of international development and information professionals provide the knowledge base the Agency needs for effecting positive change in development. R&RS facilitates resource sharing and networking among members of the development community and advises on effective use of information in development programs. Researchers respond to questions on complex development issues, and reference librarians operate the A.I.D. Development Information Center (DIC) and provide quick access to an extensive collection of development related materials.

R&RS draws on a wide array of resources, including the Development Information System (DIS), a comprehensive group of databases that act as the Agency's institutional memory, as well as hundreds of commercial databases on recent research. R&RS consults experts from government, business, donor agencies, and nonprofit organizations. R&RS publishes bibliographies citing recently published journal articles and papers, current awareness bulletins such as the *Current Contents Bulletin* of DIC journals and the monthly R&RS newsletter, *Requests & Responses*.

R&RS telephone: 703/875-4807
Fax: 703/875-5269
DIC telephone: 703/875-4818

Development Information Services Clearinghouse

The Development Information Services Clearinghouse (DISC) manages the Agency's program for acquiring, microfiching, and cataloging A.I.D.-funded documents and reports for inclusion in the A.I.D. Development Information System (DIS), a bibliographic database that provides quick and easy access to information about the Agency's projects and programs.

In step with the newest technology, DISC has developed and produced a CD-ROM version of the DIS called CD-DIS. CD-DIS is available free to A.I.D. offices, Missions and developing country institutions, and can be obtained by the public on a subscription basis. In addition, DISC provides document dissemination, micrographics, and development information management support to A.I.D.

To receive copies of A.I.D. project and program documents, and A.I.D.-funded technical reports in the DIS, write to: DISC, 1500 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1010, Arlington, VA 22209-2404

DISC telephone: 703/351-4006
Fax: 703/351-4039

r information needs

Economic and Social Data Service

Economic, financial, trade, industrial, and social data on an extensive range of topics are available from DI through the Economic and Social Data Services (ESDS). Over thirty international source databases acquired by ESDS, such as the World Bank's World Tables, IMF's International Finance Statistics and FAO's Commodity Production and Trade, form the core resources for ESDS research and analytical services.

ESDS telephone: 703/812-9770
Fax: 703/812-9779

Technical Inquiry Service (w/USDA)

Information specialists at the Technical Inquiries Group (TIG) research and disseminate literature and data needed by A.I.D. in designing and implementing agricultural, agribusiness and natural resource management projects worldwide. Staffed by professional agriculturalists and resource management specialists with work experience in 20 developing countries, TIG helps solve specific technical problems by linking project officers with worldwide research results and state of the art information. Utilized are data sources, economic analyses, literature and the expertise of USDA's many agencies, including the worldwide collection of the National Agricultural Library. The Department's network of land-grant universities and other cooperating institutions, private firms, and trade associations are also regularly tapped for technical publications and advice.

For assistance, contact the Leader, Technical Inquiries Group, USDA/OICD, Room 3110-A, South Building, Washington, D.C. 20250-4300

USDA TIG telephone: 202/690-1826
Fax: 202/690-4846

Talk about service. The reply arrived so fast that we hardly had time to turn off the fax machine we used to make the request.

—Arthur M. Fell,
Aid Policies Review Division,
Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development

How can we help you?

We welcome requests for technical services and information by letter, email, cable, telephone, and telefax. Be specific in describing your service and/or information needs so that we may serve you as effectively as possible. Please mail your information requests to:

POL/CDIE/DI
Room 209, SA-18
Agency for International Development
Washington, DC
20523-1802

Cable: POL/CDIE/DI
Email: CDIE INFO INQUIRY
Fax: 703/875-5269